

De Montfort University

Assessment and Feedback Policy 2016

Key principles

Assessment is both *for* learning and *of* learning. The purpose of the policy is to ensure assessment is used to develop students' learning, and to ensure there is a consistency of standards.

Assessment should be:

- *Transparent*: such that all parts of the assessment process are explicit and readily accessible.
- *Equitable*: so that all assessment is fair, taking account of learning requirements and actively removing barriers to achievement, and operates through consistent application of criteria.
- *Valid*: so that assessment is seen as integral to student learning and fit for purpose, particularly in relation to level, content and intended learning outcomes.
- *Reliable*: such that the judgements derived from assessment are accurate, verifiable and criterion-referenced.
- *Consistent*: such that assessment judgements are agreed and moderated, and module cohorts receive feedback of comparable quality and promptness.
- *Just*: so that there are effective mechanisms that deal with breaches of assessment regulations and can resolve appeals against assessment decisions.
- *Enabling*: so that all students have the best possible opportunity to demonstrate their learning to the best of their potential.

Further guidance

- Programme Leader
- PMB chair or Head of School/Department
- Faculty Chair of Learning and Teaching Committee
- Faculty Heads of Studies and Postgraduate Studies
- Faculty Heads of Quality

Learning and Teaching at DMU: <http://lt2020.our.dmu.ac.uk>

CELT hub: <http://celt.our.dmu.ac.uk>

The Academic Development Lead (People and Organisational Development) can be contacted regarding assessment related professional development opportunities.

Important note: This policy will come into full effect in 2016-17. During 2015-16, programme teams are encouraged to engage with the policy in the current delivery of teaching and assessment, while developing action plans in preparation for 2016-17. Further guidance is available on the DAQ webpages.

1. Assessment Design

Programme teams shall:

- 1.1. **Design assessments that allow students to demonstrate the intended programme learning outcomes.** Programme learning outcomes should describe what students are expected to achieve upon successful completion of the programme.
- 1.2. **Design modules so that assessment is fully integrated into the learning process.** Students' learning is best supported by an integrated sequence of formative and summative tasks. Assessment design should ensure students have opportunities to receive regular feedback, self-reflect and therefore further develop.
- 1.3. **Ensure assessment allows fair participation by all students.** The design of assessments should be inclusive and anticipatory of the most usual needs of students, without the need for reasonable adjustments for individual students.
- 1.4. **Use a wide range of assessment methods.** This ensures that the diverse abilities of students can be both developed and demonstrated, taking into account differences in learning styles. A wide range of skills, including employability skills, should be directly assessed.
- 1.5. **Avoid overuse of summative assessment.** It is recommended that normally there shall be no more than 2 summative assessments in a 15 credit module, and 4 (including any examination) in a 30-60 credit module. Use of formative assessments that prepare students for summative assessments is encouraged.

2. Student Engagement

Programme teams shall:

- 2.1. **Engage students with their own assessment.** This may involve, for example, offering opportunities for students to input into decisions about the assessment and the specific criteria that are applied. Students should also be encouraged to self-evaluate their work, before and/or after receiving feedback.
- 2.2. **Develop students' understanding of assessment.** Accurate assessment depends on complex, professional judgements based on explicit criteria and standards agreed at programme validation and review. A greater student understanding should be promoted through discussion, e.g. using exemplars to evaluate the grading of previous students' work.
- 2.3. **Use peer-assessment methods** where appropriate. These can enable students to learn more about themselves as learners. A shared understanding of the validity and fairness of assessment can be fostered through peer-to-peer activities.

Personal tutors shall:

- 2.4. **Proactively review each student's overall progress** with the student, normally at the start and end of each term.

3. Assessment Schedule

Programme teams shall:

- 3.1. **Publish an annual calendar of all assessments** for the programme in advance of teaching. The calendar shall indicate the type of assessment and weighting. This should include details of formative and summative assessments, including examinations, and the dates when marked work will be returned.
- 3.2. **Ensure that assessments are reasonably distributed** across the programme to minimise the 'bunching' of deadlines, from both the student and staff perspective. As far as possible this should apply to programmes in which there are module options/pathways.
- 3.3. **Publish information about module assessments in the module handbook**, including the assignment topic, weighting, submission and feedback return date, whether the work is to be marked anonymously or not and, as appropriate, task description.

4. Submission and Marking of Work

Programme teams shall:

- 4.1. **Adopt the use of Blackboard for written work submissions where appropriate and agreed by the module team.** When submission is via the VLE, duplicate paper submissions shall not normally be required. It should be made clear to students for each assessment whether dual submission is required.
- 4.2. **Ensure students receive consistent treatment for late submission** as determined by the undergraduate and postgraduate regulations.
- 4.3. **Ensure that all submitted work is considered for moderation**, including work submitted late or with a permitted extension.
- 4.4. **Use the established generic University and/or Faculty marking descriptors** contained within the current handbooks & regulations for undergraduate and postgraduate awards.
- 4.5. **Develop contextualised versions of the generic marking descriptors**, where appropriate, that are more directly relevant to the subject area and the programme learning outcomes. Where this occurs, the programme handbook should demonstrate a direct and clear link back to the generic descriptors.

- 4.6. **Use the full range of marks available** in accordance with the generic marking descriptors or programme-specific marking descriptors when provided.

5. Feedback Promptness

Programme teams shall:

- 5.1. **Return marked work with feedback no later than 4 weeks** (20 working days) after the submission deadline, for work that was submitted on time. This period includes vacations when the university is open. See also 5.9 below.
- 5.2. **Encourage a ‘feedforward’ approach to feedback, ensuring that marked work is returned at the earliest opportunity.** Students benefit from the opportunity to reflect upon feedback before proceeding to the next task or assessment, The 4 week period should be regarded as a maximum, so marked work can be returned as soon as it is available for the entire module cohort.
- 5.3. **There is no requirement for marks to be moderated, i.e., double or second marked, before students receive the mark and feedback.** A statement should be attached to feedback reports: *“This mark/grade is provisional until moderation is complete and confirmed by the relevant Assessment Board, and may change.”* However moderation is expected before the return of work marked by staff new to teaching and marked by team-assessed modules. This should take place within the 4 week period.
- 5.4. **Ensure that the design and scheduling of assessments facilitates timely feedback.** Depending on the module structure, the 4 week maximum period for feedback may be unreasonably long because students need formative feedback before undertaking subsequent tasks.

Faculties shall:

- 5.5. **Maintain and monitor a database of all assignment deadlines and return dates.**
- 5.6. **Remind staff when a 4 week period is due to expire and immediately investigate any failure to meet the 4 week maximum.**
- 5.7. **Report instances of modules in which the 4 week maximum was not met.** See the Feedback Monitoring supplement.
- 5.8. **Consider the weekly demands on staff during workload planning,** to ensure that heavy marking loads are predicted and other activities de-prioritised accordingly. Additional staffing to assist those with particularly heavy marking loads should be considered, to help ensure the 4 week maximum is not exceeded.
- 5.9. **Consider the implications of staff annual leave on feedback return times.** If staff are on pro-rata contracts, or have annual leave during a 4 week period, reasonable measures should be taken to help ensure the 4 week maximum is

not exceeded, e.g. by making alternative arrangements for marking. If an extension to 4 weeks cannot be avoided, this should be predicted and a new return date agreed and communicated to students.

6. Feedback Quality

Programme teams shall:

- 6.1. **Communicate grades and feedback via Blackboard or other appropriate VLE where possible.**
- 6.2. **Develop alternative means of providing feedback**, such as audio (e.g. via Turnitin) or tutorials, where appropriate.
- 6.3. **Ensure written feedback is typed, signed and dated by the marker.** Typically, a feedback report will be a minimum of 100 words, in order to address **6.4.3 and 6.4.4** below.
- 6.4. **Agree a single pro forma report for the programme or subject assessment type**, where possible, to ensure:
 - 6.4.1. Consistency in the presentation and detail of written feedback
 - 6.4.2. Consistency between modules within the same programme
 - 6.4.3. Feedback provides an explanation of mark awarded with reference to learning outcomes and the marking criteria
 - 6.4.4. Feedback includes comments regarding areas of strength, areas needing improvement and recommended actions to improve academic performance.
- 6.5. **Use of quick check lists and Likert scales, when appropriate**, to make the key criteria explicit, facilitate the marking process and support feedback comments.
- 6.6. **Provide generic, module level feedback on examinations**, within 4 weeks of the examination date.

7. Anonymous marking

Programme teams shall:

- 7.1. **Mark anonymous submissions** where possible and practical (summative assessment only).
- 7.2. **Apply to the relevant Programme Management Board for exceptions** to anonymous marking. Unresolved requests should be referred to the Faculty Academic Committee and then by University Learning and Teaching Committee (ULTC). FACs are responsible for monitoring exemptions which shall be reported to ULTC.
- 7.3. **Anonymity applies only to the marking process**, and ends before feedback is given.

8. Moderation

Programme teams shall:

8.1. **Ensure all coursework is moderated via second or double marking** in accordance with the University Handbook & Regulations for Undergraduate & Postgraduate Awards.

8.2. **Ensure the moderation sample complies with the following:**

The sample for internal and external moderation is composed in line with protocols agreed with the PMB, subject to the minimum size criteria for sampling. The minimum sample should comprise scripts from **all** sites where the module is delivered and will normally include the assessment(s) marked highest and lowest overall, a selection of passed assessments from each classification band, a sample of fails and any problematic assessments.

Once the minimum sample has been composed as described above:

- For modules of up to 100 students the sample size for internal and external moderation shall normally be 10 assessments (this would require all items in the case of very small modules).
- For modules of over 100 students the sample size should be \sqrt{n} of assessments (e.g. if the cohort size is 260 the sample will be 16 items).

8.3. **Ensure moderation through second marking or double marking processes are documented** and the evidence made available to external examiners. The samples of work provided for moderation, and to the external examiner, must be accompanied by the full marksheet(s) for the assessment(s) under review.

8.4. **Ensure that all examination scripts are independently checked** for mathematical accuracy in the adding up of marks.

[Moderation is the review of the marks awarded to a particular assessment. It is conducted in order to assure the institution and its external examiners that there is consistency of marking against the University's generic mark descriptors. The process involves an evaluation of the distribution of marks and a discussion of the marks awarded to an appropriate sample of work.

Double marking is moderation where the second marker does not normally see the first marker's marks and comments. Second marking differs in that the moderator, who should be external to the marking team, sees the marks and comments of the first marker. It is the responsibility of the Programme Management Board to decide if moderation of an assessment is undertaken via double or second marking.]

9. Plagiarism

Programme teams shall:

- 9.1. **Check written coursework for originality** using Turnitin where this is appropriate to the learning outcomes and assessment design. This includes written dissertations and major projects with a written component. Failure by students to do so will be regarded as a non-submission.
- 9.2. **Observe the agreed University definitions** of academic offences, such as bad academic practice, collusion and plagiarism, together with the approved tariff of penalties.
- 9.3. **Include reference to the offences and the available tariff of penalties in module handbooks** along with details of the Faculty's Academic Practice Officer, who will be able to provide guidance and support to both staff and students.

Approved by Academic Quality Committee, June 2016